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ABSTRACT

The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls have been sampling public opinion about U.S. public schools for over 25 years. This book presents selected findings of the annual polls, with a focus on public perceptions of educational finance, school effectiveness, educational reform, discipline, and school choice. Chapter 1 presents data that dispute the common belief that Americans have lost faith in the public schools. Nationwide, parents have given their children's schools a "B" grade since 1986 and tend to grade public schools overall slightly lower. Americans report that they value education above the military and above business productivity. Chapter 2 provides poll data on educational finance, which indicate that most Americans are willing to pay more taxes to raise the standard of public education. The third chapter examines attitudes toward educational change. The American public is highly supportive of changes that hold promise of improving the public schools' capacity to meet sound educational goals. However, people are wary of changes that might threaten the principles on which public education is grounded. Views of the major problems facing schools, particularly drugs and student discipline, are described in the fourth chapter. Chapter 5 examines poll data on school choice, which show that most Americans do not support educational vouchers but do support public school choice. Ten tables are included. (LMI)

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